

### **In the Claims**

Claims 1-15 (cancelled)

Claim 16 (new) An ophthalmic composition comprising:

a free-flowing vehicle with increased viscosity, and

a preservative consisting essentially of a benzyllauryldimethylammonium salt.

Claim 17 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein the vehicle is an aqueous based gel.

Claim 18 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 17, wherein the vehicle comprises at least one viscosity-increasing synthetic or natural polymer in aqueous solution or dispersion.

Claim 19 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 18, wherein the polymer comprises a carboxyvinyl polymer or an ethylene/maleic anhydride polymer.

Claim 20 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 18, wherein the polymer comprises a carboxypolymethylene polymer.

Claim 21 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 18, wherein the polymer comprises a cellulose derivative, a natural gum or a dextran derivative.

Claim 22 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein the vehicle comprises a single-phase aqueous liquid.

Claim 23 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein the vehicle comprises a two-phase liquid.

Claim 24 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 23, wherein the vehicle comprises an oil/water emulsion.

Claim 25 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein the preservative is present in an amount of 0.001 to 0.5 weight percent based on total weight of the composition.

Claim 26 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 25, wherein the preservative is present in an amount of 0.01 to 0.05 weight percent based on total weight of the composition.

Claim 27 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, further comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of an active ingredient, a tonicity adjusting agent and a pH adjusting agent.

Claim 28 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, further comprising vitamin A.

Claim 29 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, comprising:

0.001 to 1 weight percent of carboxypolyethylene;  
0.0005 to 0.05 weight percent of benzyllauryldimethylammonium chloride;  
0.1 to 10 weight percent of sorbitol; and  
water, the composition having a physiologically acceptable pH.

Claim 30 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 29, comprising:

0.1 to 0.5 weight percent of carboxypolyethylene;  
0.001 to 0.01 weight percent of benzyllauryldimethylammonium chloride;  
1 to 5 weight percent of sorbitol; and  
water, the composition having a physiologically acceptable pH.

Claim 31 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 29, comprising an alkali metal hydroxide or acid in an amount effective to provide the composition with the physiologically acceptable pH.

Claim 32 (new) The ophthalmic composition of claim 16, wherein irritation or damage to eye tissue is avoided even when the composition is applied to eye tissue repeatedly over a lengthy period or resides on eye tissue for a lengthy period.

Claim 33 (new) A composition for administration to the eye comprising a preservative in an amount effective to preserve the composition, the preservative consisting essentially of benzyllauryldimethylammonium salt.

Claim 34 (new) The composition of claim 33, having the form of an eye drop composition that further comprises an active ingredient.

Claim 35 (new) The composition of claim 33, having the form of an artificial tear composition.

Claim 36 (new) The composition of claim 33, wherein the salt is benzyllauryldimethylammonium chloride.

Claim 37 (new) The composition of claim 33, having the form of an aqueous based gel which can be administered as drops and further comprising a viscosity-increasing polymer.

Claim 38 (new) A method of preserving an ophthalmic composition, comprising employing benzyllauryldimethylammonium salt in an amount effective to preserve the composition, wherein irritation or damage to eye tissue is avoided even when the composition is applied to eye tissue repeatedly over a lengthy period or resides on eye tissue for a lengthy period.

Claim 39 (new) The method of claim 38, comprising employing  
benzyl lauryldimethylammonium chloride in an amount effective to preserve the composition.